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Good evening distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Nicole Elsinger, and I am a Senior at Central Connecticut State University, pursuing a degree in Accounting. I am CCSU's Student Government Association President, and will share the importance of increased funding for state institutions.

The K-12 education I received in my hometown of Suffield focused on envisioning our futures. From career days in middle school, to college preparation in high school, there was always an element of progression – what were we going to become?

I remember the anticipation throughout my senior year of high school regarding college applications. We were finally able to define our futures -- however, I struggled to partake in this excitement. Due to my family's financial situation, I had to assume responsibility for most college expenses. With this barrier to entry, what would I become?

After significant consideration of my financial future, I enrolled at CCSU, mainly because of the affordable tuition. I realized that CCSU is where the rest of my life would start. The mounting pressure from my prior education of imagining my future was also worsened by my shyness.

Despite my fear of talking to people, I ran for Student Government. Since you all are elected officials, I'm sure you know the amount of social engagement involved with running for office. Campaigning for my position as an SGA Senator pushed me outside my comfort zone. Fortunately, I won my first race, and started my career on SGA. With this newfound hobby, what would I become?

Being on Student Government and working with the CCSU Student Activities office was one of the best decisions I made for myself. I was working in a supportive environment with people who motivated me to be a better leader, to come out of my shell, and to realize my capabilities. Because of this support, I continued with SGA and became President, which I never considered possible.

The dedication to student activities at CCSU was exemplified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the uncertainty, clubs continued functioning. Resources were quickly provided to accommodate online meetings, and previously on-ground events were re-imagined. This level of commitment is unique to CCSU, and wholly important to those such as me who developed because of their student involvement.

I am at the end of my college career, which has allowed for reflection on my experience, and the results largely appease the uncertainties of my past self. I am graduating college debt-free due to the affordable tuition and quality education at CCSU. I am no longer shy or scared in the company of others. I no longer have to question what I will become. The resources and devotion to success I experienced at CCSU are instrumental in my personal growth. Attaining these

experiences would not have been possible without affordable tuition at CCSU. Financial support should be continued to provide this opportunity to as many students as possible.

Thank you for your time, and for the opportunity to speak.